

The Iliad of Homer

Trojan War (if factual) dated between 1334 B.C. and 1150 B.C.

Homer probably wrote around 850 B.C., biasing it slightly for his upper-class Greek audience

The story was probably originally known as *Rage*, the Greek word that begins the first line of the poem.

The Iliad tells only a small slice, starting during the tenth year of the siege on Troy and ending about 50 days later.

for the Greeks [Achaians, Argives, Danaans]...

Atreus' son warlike **Menelaos**, husband of Helen

Atreus' son **Agamemnon**, lord of men
Laertes' son, resourceful, long-suffering

Odysseus

Tydeus' son **Diomedes** of the great war cry

Peleus' son **Achilleus** of the swift feet
[**Aiakides**]

Menoitios' son, the blameless **Patroklos**

Hera, Athene, Poseidon,

Hephaistos

for the Trojans...

King Priam of the strong ash spear

Priam's son, manslaughtering **Hektor** of the shining

helm, breaker of horses

Priam's son, godlike **Alexandros** [**Paris**]

Anchises' son **Aineias**

Aphrodite, Ares, Zeus, Apollo, Hermes

thêmis [moral order, social values, expectations, ethics]

mênis [indignant wrath]

philos [strongest affective relationship that human beings form]

Book 1 (pages 59-75)

After suffering great plague, Achilleus suggests the Achaians consult a holy man (Kalchas) to determine the cause of their problem. What does Kalchas fear as he provides his information (74-83)? What is Agamemnon's response to his explanation (106-120)?

It will be difficult to find an immediate replacement for Chryseis. Describe how the interaction between Achilleus and Agamemnon reveals each of their personalities and desire for honor and recognition (131-194).

Athene (216-221) and Nestor (254-284) intervene to what overall effect (286-303)?

What request does Achilleus ask Thetis to make of Zeus (407-412)?

Consider Thetis' request (505-510), Zeus' response (518-527), and his later conversation with Hera. Compare the result of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon and that between Zeus and Hera (534-594). How do the events on Mt. Olympus reflect events on earth?

TWO DAYS OF FIGHTING PASS as Zeus allows the Trojans to destroy the Achaians in keeping with his promise to Thetis and Achilles with his Myrmidon troops sit out the battle aboard his ships

Book 9 (start on line 89 on page 200-217)

Nestor scolds Agamemnon: "I told you so" (96-113). How does Agamemnon's response (115-161) show how much his attitude toward Achilles has changed in the elapsed time? Why might Agamemnon choose Odysseus to go to Achilles instead of going himself?

Mark down your first impressions of Patroklos, Achilles' good friend (201-220).

Odysseus is spokesman for Agamemnon and therefore speaks first because of his rhetorical skills. Although Odysseus repeats word for word most of Agamemnon's earlier speech (115-161), he changes the end conclusion (299-306). What is the intent behind the additions and omissions?

Achilles presents his reasons for rejecting Agamemnon's offer (315-420). Briefly summarize these reasons. Do you find them convincing? Explain your answer.

What does Achilles say he will do now that he has refused to accept the gifts (357-363; 426-429)?

Phoenix gives a long speech. What is Phoenix's basic message to Achilles (496-501)? What is the essential message of the story of Meleagros (600-605)?

Then Aias makes a brief speech, scolding Achilles for not accepting the offer (624-642). Does his argument seem reasonable?

Is Achilles convinced by any of these arguments (643-655)? Are his reasons defensible? Does his behavior fit the warrior codes established in other stories?

Read the news Odysseus conveys to Agamemnon upon his return to camp (676-692) and the response of the Achaians. How will Achilles's response determine their actions?

**Odysseus and Diomedes secretly discover Trojan weak spots.
With this knowledge, Agamemnon mounts a massive battle to drive back the Trojans.
While he is successful for a while, eventually many top fighters are wounded and the Trojans breach the
Greek wall around their ships. Nestor advises Patroklos to provide counsel to Achilles.**

Book 16 (pages 330-353)

Consider the information Patroklos brings (23-29) and his request (38-45).

Why does Achilles give in to Patroklos and what is his warning (49-96)? What does this show about him?

What threatens the fortunes of the Achaians (112-124)? Why is this such a dire situation?

Achilleus at last unleashes the Myrmidons, who had been unwillingly withheld from battle (see 180-209). What prayer does Achilles make to Zeus (233-248)? What will be the success of this prayer (249-252)?

Full of fury, Patroklos attacks the Trojan Sarpedon, son of Zeus (419-430). What action does Zeus consider in 431-438? What warning does Hera give to Zeus (439-461)? What control do the gods have over human fate?

What request does Sarpedon made to Glaukos, his countryman, as he is dying (477-501)? What is the urgency?

What does Patroklos want to do with the body after killing Sarpedon (553-561)? For what purpose? (See 663-683 to see about their success).

In what sense is Patroklos responsible for his own death (see 637-651; 684-709; 783-792)?

Who is involved in Patroklos's death (788-867)? His death is more elaborate than many other fighters; why?

What prediction does the dying Patroklos make to Hektor (843-854)?

Book 17 (pages 354-374)

Trojans and Greeks alike mass to claim Patroklos' body. Euphorbos (who had been first to spear Patroklos) battles Menelaos and loses (1-60). Menelaos seems he will be successful in claiming Euphorbos's armor until Hektor is roused to defend the body. What does Menelaos reveal about his own courage to stand alone against the Trojans (90-105)?

What does Menelaos worry about with regard to the fallen Patroklos and what happens next (120-131)?

Glaukos reprimands Hektor for abandoning Sarpedon's body; what is his threat (140-168)? The fighting begins to revolve around possession of the fallen bodies. What motivations lay behind this devotion to the recovery effort?

How do the gods respond when Hektor dons Achilles' armor (182-212)? Why?

What offer does Hektor make his men (220-232)? Compare with the fight for Sarpedon. How are these bodies symbolic to both their countrymen and their enemies?

What is Achilles's role in all this fighting (401-411)?

How do the soldiers fighting to preserve the bodies view their situation (412-425; 555-566)?

Menelaos dispatches Antilochos, Nestor's son, with a message to the still-ignorant Achilles (625-693) while Telamonian Aias and Aias, son of Oileus (called together the Aiantes) make headway with Patroklos' body (715-741). What is your own response to their efforts?

Book 18 (pages 375-391)

How does Achilles mourn as he reacts to the news of Patroklos's death (22-34)?

What ironic fact does Thetis point out to Achilles (70-77)? Explain the irony of her statement.

What does Thetis predict will come out of Achilles' decision to reenter the war to revenge Patroklos (94-96)? How does Achilles respond (97-126)?

What must Thetis do before Achilles can return to battle (127-137)?

What message does Hera send to Achilles (170-180, 197-201)?

Patroklos' body is still in danger from the Trojans. How does Achilles drive back the Trojans and with whose assistance (203-238)?

Summarize briefly Poulydamas's speech to the Trojans (249-283). What is his concern? What is Hektor's reaction to this advice (284-309)? What does this show about Hektor's character at this moment?

Hektor thinks Zeus's intention in allowing him to drive the Achaians back to their ships was to give Hektor glory (293-295); was this his original intent (see Book 1 407-410)? Explain. What is Hektor's character like now?

What promise does Achilles make to the body of Patroklos (333-342)?

Hephaistos owes Thetis his loyalty (394-409). What request does she make of him (457-461) and how does he react (462-467)?

Book 19 (pages 392-403)

Achilles "unsays his anger" (54-73) and make peace with Agamemnon. Just yesterday he was refusing Agamemnon's offer of gifts; now Agamemnon makes the offer again (74-144). Summarize his speech. What does he reveal about his character based on the method he uses to reconcile with Achilles?

Achilles is anxious to get back into the fighting NOW in order to avenge Patroklos (198-214). Describe what aspects of his current mood might be strengths or a weaknesses in a fight.

What does Odysseus advise instead (215-237)? Why is this important? Remember Thetis' original request of Zeus ["So long put strength into the Trojans, until the Achaians / give my son his rights, and his honor is increased among them" (1.509-510)].

Achilleus begins to arm up (369-403). Through Hera's voice, Xanthos, one of Achilleus' immortal horses, speaks Achilleus' fate (404-417). Has he heard this prediction before? How does he respond in the face of this prediction (418-423)? Does he have the power to change his fate in any way?

Books 20 (pages 404-417)

Zeus assembles the gods for what pronouncement (19-32)? Who is on which side (33-40)? Explain why 2 or 3 gods are on the sides they chose.

Gods prepare to fight with other gods (67-75); how does Zeus look on all this (153-155)? How could this change the dynamic of the fight?

Aineias (the son of Anchises and Aphrodite, destined to be one of only 3 Trojans to escape death) encounters Achilleus. They clash to what outcome (259-352)? What does this show about the power of fate?

Hektor rouses the Trojans (364-372), but Apollo offers him advice (375-378). What circumstances make it difficult for him to obey (419-423)?

Achilleus faces Hektor for a first time to what outcome (430-444)? Again, how does this reveal fate?

Follow Achilleus' battle frenzy (455-489). Homer begins to use the imagery of fire to describe Achilleus' *mênis* wrath (490-503). Describe Achilleus' character at the end of this book.

Book 21 (pages 418-434)

Achilleus captures twelve young men for what purpose (26-33)?

Achilleus then fights Priam's son Lykaon who had returned to Troy only twelve days ago after Achilleus had previously captured and sold him into slavery. How does Lykaon try to preserve his life (70-96)? How does Achilleus respond (97-135)? What does this show about his character at this time? Describe his berserker rage.

Achilleus piles up so many bodies in the river Xanthos /Skamandros until the river addresses Achilleus with a request and then a punishment (211-250). What does this show about the gods view Achilleus' actions?

Achilleus risks being drowned; at Hera's request, Hephaistos brings fire to punish the river with what result (328-360)?

The gods talk trash to each other about who's tougher. Meanwhile Priam (king of Troy, father of Hektor and Paris) observes Achilleus approaching the city; what does he direct his people to do (526-536)? To assist, Phoibos Apollo inspires the Trojan Agenor to distract Achilleus; are they successful (544-611)?

Book 22 (pages 435-449)

What does Priam urges Hektor to do with regard to Achilleus (33-76)? What about his mother Hekabe (76-89)?

What are Hektor's feelings about fighting Achilleus (90-130)?

Achilleus chases Hektor three times around the city gates. While Athene had scolded Zeus for suggesting he could save Hektor from his fate (167-181), how does she help Achilleus (214-223, 224-247;276-277;293-303)? Why are these situations different to her?

Note carefully the images applied to Achilleus and Hektor in 131-144, 189-193, 262-264, and 308-310. How are these images related and what comment do they make upon these two heroes and the situation in which they find themselves?

At first Hektor ran. Now that he and Achilleus re-engage in combat, how does he face the conflict (278-305)?

What request does Hektor twice make of Achilleus (248-259; 337-343)? How does Achilleus answer him on both occasions (260-272; 344-354)? How does Hektor respond (355-360)? What values does each man symbolize at this point in their story?

How do Achilleus and the Achaians treat Hektor's body (367-409)? Why do they do this?

What does Priam decide he must do (408-428)? How do you feel about his character?

Book 23 (pages 450-457 end on line 261)

After observing steps taken to honor Patroklos (1-261), explore the importance of the proper burial of a hero. What steps are taken, and why? What happens if these steps are not followed?

The story goes on at *considerable* length about a series of competitive funereal games organized to honor Patroklos as well as to determine who will replace him in strength and ability. Achilles offers significant prizes for wrestling, horse racing, boxing, and other sports.

Book 24 (pages 475-496)

Follow Achilles's treatment of Hektor's corpse (1-63); how is it viewed by the gods in general, by Apollo, and by Hera?

What request does Zeus make of Thetis (104-119)? When Thetis relays this message, how does Achilles react (139-140)? Is this response surprising?

How do Hekebe (Priam's wife/Hektor's mother) and Priam deal with facing the task Priam is about to go on (200-216 and 217-227)? Do their responses surprise you?

What does Priam do and say before he leaves for his journey (228-264)? Does this surprise you?

Zeus asks Hermes (Argeiphontes) to be Priam's guide. What information does he have about Hektor's body (411-423)? How does he keep Priam safe from the Greeks (440-467)?

What does Priam do when he enters Achilles's dwelling (476-505)? What ritual act is Priam performing with these gestures? What is the irony of his kissing Achilles's hands (478-480 and 505-506)?

Describe the changes that take place in Achilles during his meeting with Priam (507-521, 549-570). How has he learned from his tragedy? How is Priam able to bring about this change of heart? Where do Achilles' old habits show themselves?

Achilles has Hektor's body anointed to cover the mistreatment of the past twelve days (579-601, 618-642). In your opinion, why does Achilles give Hektor's body back to Priam? Is it only because Zeus so ordered? Explain your answer.

What additional favor does Achilles grant Priam (656-658)? Do you find this surprising?

After a secret journey across the Greek lines and into Troy and twelve days of mourning, the poem ends with the burial of Hektor (692-804). How does this compare with the burial of Patroklos? Does this feel like an appropriate ending to the poem? Explain your answer.

Compare Chryses as a father in Book 1 to Priam as a father in Book 24. How are the two similar? How do their stories serve to frame the themes of the *Iliad*?